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John Kerry Says U.S. Backs Russia's Efforts in Syria

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U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry voiced support Wednesday for a Russian effort to bring Syria's warring factions together for talks to end the four-year conflict.

Meeting in Geneva with the UN and Arab League envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, Kerry said he hoped the Russian initiative "could be helpful." Russia is trying to bring members of Syrian President Bashar Assad's government and opposition figures together in Moscow to discuss a possible political solution to stop the war that has killed thousands and displaced nearly three-quarters of the country's population.

Kerry also said he wished De Mistura well in his bid to organize local cease-fires in embattled Syrian towns, starting with Aleppo. He stressed that despite the press of world events, the situation in Syria remains on the "front burner" for the U.S.

He added that it was time for the Syrian government to put the interests of its people ahead of its survival and end what he termed a "continued catastrophe."

"It is time for President Assad, the Assad regime to put their people first and to think about the consequences of their actions which are attracting more and more terrorists to Syria, basically because of their efforts to remove Assad," Kerry said.

Although De Mistura's efforts for an Aleppo cease-fire have not yet succeeded, De Mistura said would not give up.

"I will continue, I can tell you, pushing for Aleppo, because Aleppo has become an iconic example of where things could start sending the best signal, in other words that bombing, shelling, barrel-bombing, mortar-shelling would stop, and bring some humanitarian aid, which means giving some hope to the Syrian people," he said.

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